

**Statement of Peggy Bonthron,
Citizens Water Action Coalition
Water Issues Town Hall
July 1st, 2008**

Water is Life

Unless we dramatically change our ways in how we use our water, we may be living with a severe fresh water shortage within the next quarter-century—that means throughout the world and the U.S. If we do not change soon change our relationship to water and ecosystems that sustain it, all our wealth and our knowledge will be meaningless. The world population keeps increasing by roughly 80 million people per year. Global consumption of water is doubling every 20 years—more than twice the rate of the human population growth. Earth's population is expected to jump to 8 billion people by 2025. The US population for 2007 was 302 million. As of June 25, 2008 US population is over 304 million, and that is just for 6 months into the year. AZ must realize the importance of water and protect the entire state and not just corporations, agriculture and developers.

Concerns of Green Valley Citizens

- Who is going to take the lead in resolving the potential groundwater problems that the community is facing? Green Valley is not an incorporated city. WE have GVCCC, but is that going to be strong enough to resolve issues with Pima County, local and state officials.
- The Upper Santa Cruz Provider and Users Group has formed to see how a pipeline can be built from Pima Mine Road to Canoa Ranch area so we can begin to import water to this basin.
- We have six water companies for this area, would they ever consider coming together and forming a co-op to work on this important issue – our water.
- This is a primary concern that I have been hearing for the past 15 months from the community.
- Our basin providers water for many users – one existing mine, six domestic water companies, a large pecan grove and eight golf courses.
- To serve these users it takes approximately 77,000 acre feet (AF) of groundwater. Of this, about 39,000 AF annually is not being replaced by natural or artificial recharge.
- This basin has been in overdraft of groundwater for several decades and a more severe overdraft since 2000 when the drought became more severe.
- Due to over-pumping the water table is declining each year 2 to 4 feet.
- As the PUG report indicates the aquifer will be in overdraft until 2030 and it will continue if we do nothing. It will average about 36,000 AF annually. Say over the next 22 years, the basin could have a 792,000 AF plus or minus groundwater overdraft. If you add in the previous five years of groundwater overdraft, say

- 180,000 AF, this number is staggering. So please do not say that we will have a healthy groundwater basin.
- This continuous groundwater overdraft is causing serious concerns to the residents of Green Valley when this is basically no way at the moment to substantially recharge what is being taken out. So we say to Arizona Department of Water Resources (DWR), Active Management Area (AWA), various government agencies, Pima County and the major water users in this basin and the water providers: how do you propose we resolve this potential disaster for our basin? A plan for imported water is not only dangerous for this basin, but for the state of Arizona as well.

Concerns from Green Valley

Problems from Overdraft:

- Eventually as the water table declines, it will cost a great deal more to pump the water or even maybe having to drill other wells. The community wants to know who is going to bear this cost since the primary users are the mines and pecan grove. These questions have been put forth many times, with no straight answer in return.
- Land Subsidence (sinking of the land surface) could be major damage to homes, roadways, utilities – who will bear the burden of this type of expense – the homeowners and the tax payers: Remember we only take (residential/commercial) about 10% of the groundwater.
- The annual groundwater overdraft will eventually lead to a water shortage – and it will in all probability become an extreme water shortage in some areas. How do we assist the 80 years and older people here in this community if there is a serious water shortage? Better yet, how are they going to cope at that age? AZ touts itself as a retirement state for retirees; however we do not see the protection, especially on something as important as water. The current laws only protect mining, agriculture and developers.

Where do we get Groundwater Recharge?

- Current recharge – receive 4.1 MGD from the Nogales WWTP. How much of this water gets to the Canoa Ranch area?
- Wastewater- Currently Green Valley has a small amount of wastewater from the plant that is managed by Pima County. That water is now being recharged at Quail Creek.
- Stormwater- we are capturing some of the rainfall, but not near enough. Rainwater harvesting should be part of this equation. This should become a priority to this AMA and the community.

Solutions for Recharge

- Central Arizona Project (CAP) water – imported water is expensive. No guarantee that this will last indefinitely, but is an important part of a plan.

- Wastewater – currently not that much for Green Valley, going mostly to Quail Creek.
- Stormwater Capture and Rainwater Harvesting – this could be an all important part of the solution. Rainwater is basically free after the structures are in place. Are we capturing stormwater in this basin – some place like the pecan grove and possibly the golf courses – but not near enough.
- Strongly ask Pima County Flood Control to look at putting wetlands at the old Canoa Ranch area (maybe even a small park and walking trails). This could possibly involve the federal government by providing 50% matching funds under the 1965 Land and Water Conservation Fund. This area would be a great place for recharge since Freeport-McMoran mine draws approximately 24 millions gallons per day (MGD) at the old Canoa Ranch area. Maybe the mine could take a community interest and assist in financing this project.
- Rainwater harvesting – probably some surface water constraints but they could be overcome if everyone works together: rain gardens in certain areas, homeowners could use trashcans to capture water, roof harvesting. All of the golf course could create a capture area. All new developments must have grey water and rainwater harvesting capability.
- Pima County Flood Control has made progress in building stormwater basins (7) and they are looking now at rainwater harvesting. This is a big step forward for this AMA – but where does Green Valley fit into the planning?
- Let us take that heavy curtain down that is at Pima Mine Road and begin to see what can be done to preserve this basin. The basin is strained at the moment, but if we do not begin real soon to give her some relief, there is going to be a giant hiccup that could be very costly.

Future Concerns of Green Valley

- Rosemont mine – concerns are too many to discuss today. Will say the groundwater issue is huge, as well as we must not forget contamination of the surface water. Plan calls for an annual use of 6,000-8,000 AF groundwater. We expect it will be more like 20,000 AF or more annually. The technology “dry-stacking” is so new; it has never been used in US.
- Mission Peaks - 15,000 homes and approximately 45,000 new residents. Expect to use 5,000 AF annually. Will put back 3,000 AF (this will take away from what is already calculated and in the PUG formula) of reclaimed water and 2,000 AF from CAP. Water is a concern, but what about the added vehicles on the roadways – were the roads designed to handle this many vehicles? This developer lives in Nevada and does not worry about our infrastructure, except in his advertisements.
- Any large growth, either residential or industrial, should be heavily scrutinized by the County and other governing entities. It should be asked could we sustain this growth if by chance there were several years without any type of imported water? We MUST do intelligent water planning for sustainability, not politically motivated, if Arizona is going to survive over the next 25-40 years. Greed has no place in this formula.

Closing

We cannot let this basin deteriorate for much longer. Those that can resolve this problem cannot be like an ostrich and bury one's head in the sand. I know that it is easy to hide behind archaic laws or laws that need to be modified. We have not gotten into this large groundwater overdraft overnight, nor will the cure come quickly, it will take some time. And this will only happen if we take greed and politics off of the table. The solution involves charting a new course for the future of Arizona based on wise policies, and making a commitment to stay the course by citizens, corporations and government entities.